

Menopause



Menopause is a natural and normal part of life for women. It is the time when women stop having periods and are no longer fertile. Women are usually considered to be in menopause after going 12 months without having a period, but the transition to menopause can start years before. Menopause usually happens around age 50, but can happen earlier or later. Menopause causes many changes to a woman's body because hormone levels change.

Signs of Transitioning to Menopause and After Menopause

- Changes in weight
- Decrease in libido (desire to have sex)
- Difficulty concentrating or memory lapses
- Difficulty sleeping and fatigue
- Hot flashes or night sweats
 - A sudden feeling of heat, especially around the upper body, may occur at any time of day, often causing facial and neck flushing, red blotches, heavy sweating, or cold shivering
- Joint or muscles aches
- Loss or thinning of hair
- Mood swings, depression, anxiety, or increased irritability
- Periods become very irregular during the transition to menopause
 - Bleeding may be very heavy or very light
 - Periods come less frequently or more often
 - Periods last for different amounts of time; longer or shorter than usual
- Vaginal dryness

Reasons to Talk to a Healthcare Provider

- Any bleeding that occurs after you have gone 12 months without a period
- Cardiovascular Disease
 - Chance of getting heart disease can increase with menopause
- Incontinence (trouble controlling your urine)
- Medications or hormone replacement therapy may be available to relieve the symptoms of menopause; talk with your health care provider to see if any of these treatments may be right for you
- Osteoporosis (weakening of the bones)
 - As estrogen decreases with menopause, bone density can decrease
- Weight Gain
 - Metabolism can slow down so many women need less calories per day and need to exercise to maintain a healthy weight

Treating Menopause Symptoms

Menopause is not something that you can prevent or stop, but it is possible to treat some of the symptoms. In order to decrease irritability, depression and anxiety and have less health complications with menopause, it is important to take care of yourself and take time for yourself. Make sure you are:

- Eating foods with calcium, magnesium, and Vitamin D, or taking vitamin/mineral supplements as needed
 - Helps your bones stay strong and decrease chances of getting osteoporosis
- Eating healthy foods, such as
 - Foods with less or no sugar added and less unhealthy fats
 - Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy protein
- Exercising regularly
 - Helps you sleep and reduces anxiety, irritability, and depression
 - Keeps bones strong
 - Strengthens pelvic floor muscles to have better control of your bladder
- Having good sleep hygiene
 - Decreases anxiety and irritability
 - Reduces fatigue
- Limiting or decreasing caffeine, stimulants, and alcohol
 - Helps you sleep, concentrate, and relax
 - Improves bladder control
- Not smoking (tobacco or other substances)
 - Decreases menopause-related health complications
- Practicing calming hobbies or participating in activities that make you happy
 - Decreases depression, irritability, and anxiety
- Practicing relaxation
 - Reduces stress, decreases your heart rate, helps with concentration and mood swings, and makes it easier for you to sleep; learn more about relaxation and the relaxation response [here](#)
- Staying connected to close friends and family
 - Decreases depression and anxiety